Table of Contents

1. Disclaimer
2. Not Alone [1] (UMBLI)
3. Not Alone [2] (UMBLI)
4. Not Alone [3] (UMBLI)
5. Inseparable (ANEMARIN)
6. Don't Back Out (WINTERWATCHER)
7. Happy Again (THORNMOVER)
8. Heart of Smoke (CLERIL)
9. Undertow (DARKSIGHT)
10. Snowy, Sandy, Starry (MOONBLI + WYNX)
11. Murderer (GLORYBRINGER)

Disclaimer

By no means am I trying to make profit off of this story or the cover art.

The cover art does not belong to me, if it belongs to you, please contact me via inbox. I will credit you for sure.

Wings of Fire does not belong to me (even though I definitely wish it did). This book series (and hopefully future movie franchise) belongs to Tui T. Sutherland.

Final warning:

For anybody who is a Starspeaker, this story isn't for you

Final Warning:
Contains sappy love. ew. I really hate my saucy writing ability. yuck.

Not Alone [1] (UMBLI)

[image]

[IMAGE CREDIT TO LIGHT-STAR-DOES-ART!]

Umber sighed as he gripped the letter in his paw, letting his mind wander as he stared at the rain.

Behind him, he heard his sister softly snoring, and his heart thumped with guilt.

Poor Sora.

He absentmindedly watched the storm, the harsh rain and wind unable to find them when they were so far in the cave. At least they had found refuge.

He thought back to when he and Sora had first fled Jade Mountain Academy, about three months ago. His sister and himself had flown blindly for a few days, heading in the direction of the Mud Kingdom, when Sora said she remembered a cave they could stay in. The cave was amongst the ones in the Claws of the Clouds Mountains, facing the Mud Kingdom; it was close to Jade Mountain. They had agreed to camp out there, at least until the heat had died down from Sora's attack on Icicle. But then when Darkstalker came back, the two had been instructed to stay put by the Jade Winglet (namely Qibli and Turtle via animus-touched parchment) so they'd be safe.

And now that things were over, the two were able to return out of fugitive status. Even though Umber wanted to do so (*badly*), Sora had expressed that she still felt like she wasn't ready to go back to civilisation just yet.

In his letters to the Jade Winglet, Umber had conveyed this; he was also willing to remain with Sora for as long as she needed, and she

had recently told him that she might be ready soon.
Though Umber was glad he was with his sister, he always awoke in their cave with a feeling that something was tugging on his heart – back toward the mountain, towards another dragon he loved. Though his other brothers and sister was there, Umber didn't quite think this yearning meant them.

His heart meant *him*.

Funny, charming, laughable, relatable, amazing. Always finding the joy in life and always wanting to make friends.

Qibli.

Umber heard crinkling and realised he was gripping the note too hard, creating a small tear. Though the paper was enchanted to erase and deliver itself on command, it wasn't indestructible, and Umber didn't want Turtle to have to magic another one. He hastily loosened his grip, deciding to read the note over again.

Umber!
Hello, fellow JadeWing! I hope you and Sora are doing amazingly well – you know, without any bad-guys from the past chasing after your tails. Rest assured, as always: you have nothing to worry about anymore.
I really hope you both don't mind... but we told Clay about everything that happened when we gave him one of my earrings. We waited until we were sure Clay wasn't under Darkstalker's spell anymore, and he promised not to tell anyone. Ideally, we would have waited to ask you two for permission first, but this past month has been especially hard on him; since Darkstalker was dealt with, Clay has been more than ever concerned about you and Sora, so we felt like we had to at least let him know that you two were safe. Please know that he sends his love for both you and Sora.
Would you like to visit us down at Sanctuary? In case you've forgotten, that's Winter's "save the scavengers!" movement adoption place.
Attached is a map of where to go.
Please also bring Sora if she's feeling up for it.
We hope to see you soon – maybe in a few weeks' time? Let us know!
Dearly sincerely,
Your friends:
Moon, Winter, Kinkajou, Turtle, *and* ***Qibli***

Umber felt his heart begin to speed up again. *Qibli.*

It had been a few days since the two MudWings had received this letter, and for the entire first day Sora had had to think about whether she was ready or not to face everyone again, especially Winter – Umber could see the guilt dancing in his sister's eyes whenever she thought of the IceWing. That was why Umber had been thrilled and incredibly proud when Sora finally decided that she wanted them to go visit Sanctuary.

Now, all Umber had to do was send the reply.

The MudWing grabbed the nearest inkwell nestled into the crook of the cave (emerald green, one of the few assets they had stolen from their sleeping caves as they had whisked away) and scribbled his answer on the back of the parchment:

Hello everyone!
I have asked Sora if she wants to come, and she said yes! We'll see you at Sanctuary the day after tomorrow. We can't wait!
Also... it's Qibli who normally receives these letters and shares them with the rest of everyone, right?

Umber paused, wondering if he should continue or get the note to erase itself.

No. You made yourself a promise. You have to c ommit to it.

He resumed writing, under new determination.

Qibli, don't share this part with the others:
When I'm at Sanctuary, can I talk with you privately, if that's okay? I know it sounds weird, but give me a chance? It's just... I've missed you, and I want to catch up.
We're really looking forward to seeing you all!
– Umber and Sora

Umber rolled up the scroll and settled down further in the cave, his back resting against his sisters', eyes glazed over peacefully as he stared at the thin lines of water pounding the ground over and over.

I'm coming, Qibli.

All I have to do is wait.

›◊‹

Flap, flap, flap, flap, soar.

"Do you think Winter is still going to be mad at me?" Sora asked from beside Umber.

The two had been flying through the scattering of mountains for most of the day, which was a feat Umber was pretty sure no other MudWing had attempted before. Their muscles ached, and their wings were burning. They took rests often. But now, they were almost there. Umber couldn't bring himself to stop again, not when they were so close.

His heart was tugging him, pulling him up, up, up above the horizon, towards the SandWing he knew so well.

"I doubt it," he replied. "You were trying to avenge Crane. Winter knows what revenge can do to dragons." Umber looked up from the map, brushing Sora's wing with his own.
He always saw the pain in her eyes whenever they brought up Crane, even before Jade Mountain Academy; the two had been close, closer than sisters, like their souls were carved from the same stone. Crane and Sora had been best friends, and then... Crane had just been ripped away.

That hadn't been fair to anyone. They were at war. Icicle might not be sorry about it, but Umber knew how much it hurt Winter. Winter knows what it's like to lose a sibling. He was sympathetic.

Umber winced as he saw his sister glance down, trying to stop her tears.

He angled just a little bit closer to her, brushing her wing with his. "I'm *positive* he'll forgive you," he insisted. "Qibli tells me he's grown and matured very much."

Sora stared at the green land under them, and Umber decided to consult the map again.

He braked abruptly. They had made it!

"Through here," he said to his sister. He dove down into the valley between the mountains, flying straight ahead across the grass and – – crashed into a sparkly white dragon mid-flight.

The two fell to the grass, the white dragon whacking himself with his own wings. "Ex*cuse me*!" He exclaimed in a familiar voice.

Umber smiled nervously, rolling to his feet. "I'm so sorry, Winter! It's nice to see you!" He tried to rectify his damage quickly, reaching out towards his clawmate to brush some dirt off his scales.

The IceWing stopped spitting dirt, his head snapping up in realisation.

"Umber!" Winter's face lit up as he disregarded the MudWing's help to instead pull his friend into a hug. "I'm so glad you could make it!"

Umber was caught completely off-guard, and stood momentarily stunned before ferociously returning Winter's enthusiastic hug. He was surprised at how his scales sang, how his insides warmed. He didn't realise he had missed his friend so much.

"I'm glad you invited us," Umber said in a small voice, squeezing his friend.

"Us?" Winter echoed as the two pulled away.

Before Umber could say anything else, the MudWing's older sister touched down on the ground next to him.

"Sora," Winter acknowledged in alarm.

Not Alone [2] (UMBLI)

[image]

Umber felt his breath quickening. "Winter, wait, let me explain. Sora's here to make peace with you, she doesn't want to fight. None of us do," he added, spreading a wing over his sister. "She did what she did because she wanted vengeance for – for Crane."

Sora let her head fall in submission, her jaw hitting her armour-scaled chest. "Please forgive me, Winter," she whispered. "I just... I couldn't let it go. I never intended for anyone else to get hurt, and I know what I did was wrong. I promise after this visit you'll never have to see me again."

There was a brief moment when Winter's eyes widened, his mouth opening in surprise. He sighed through his nose, nodding.
"I accept your apology, Sora." His voice was quiet, not nearly as harsh and Umber was expecting.
"I in turn apologise for Icicle's behaviour – she was a danger to us all, but you have no need to worry about her anymore. For her crimes, she is awaiting trial at the Ice Kingdom." The IceWing regarded the dragons in front of him, thinking; before he smiled – a genuine smile, asking for peace and connection.
"I appreciate your grace and your honour," he said to Sora, "and I would like to be friends, if that's alright with you."

Sora looked at him, blinking. With a relieved cry she couldn't control, she rushed forward and enveloped the IceWing in her own hug.

Umber smiled, twining tails with his sister. He brushed wings with Winter when the IceWing returned her hug, both of the boys giving Sora the time she needed.

When she pulled back again, Winter's smile was still there as he commented, "Three moons, you MudWings love physical affection."

Umber and Sora laughed, sharing a glance and each seeing the

relieved, happy glint in each other's eye.

The guilt was gone, the past was behind them.

"Thank you," Umber spoke for both of them.

Winter dismissed the matter with a wave of his wing. "If I deserve redemption, I don't see why you shouldn't get that same chance."

Umber grinned. "I quite like this new stick you've turned over."

Winter rolled his eyes good-naturedly. "You and everyone else," he remarked. The tip of his tail flicked up, as if he had remembered something. "Speaking of everyone else, it's probably time for you both to come see them."

Umber's heart lit up, doing a small jump. "Yes!" He agreed, smiling at Sora. He looked back at Winter. "Please lead the way."

Bowing his head at the both of them, Winter turned and took to the skies.

›◊‹

Winter landed in Sanctuary's marketplace.

As Umber touched down beside the IceWing, he couldn't help but be impressed. When he first heard of Winter's Sanctuary, he had pictured a small scavenger den made of stone and grey bricks, but he hadn't known the town was for dragons as well as scavengers. Qibli hadn't been kidding in his past notes when he had compared Sanctuary to Possibility!

"The meeting place is in there," Winter nodded to a tall grey building. The Sanctuary's own great hall, Umber guessed.

"Of course, we're not rich enough to afford diamonds or jewels to *'bedazzle'* the Grand Hall, so don't expect the place to be lathered with as much grandeur as its name expresses," Winter continued as he lead the two MudWings to the Grand Hall, winding around the stalls and returning friendly hellos and waves as merchants and shoppers recognised him.

Winter pulled aside a red curtain that served as the Grand Hall's door (Umber remembered he had heard from Qibli that Winter had only installed those instead of actual doors because Moon preferred them). "We're back!" He called, putting a stop to the excited muttering that had been happening seconds prior.
Inside was a round wooden table, and sitting around it: Moon, Kinkajou, Turtle, Clay, Tsunami, Riptide, Peril who was awkwardly shifting from talon to talon on the floor beside Clay, and –

Qibli, Umber breathed.

"UMBER! SORA!" Clay shouted, leaping to his feet and lunging towards his siblings. Brown wings enveloped over brown wings as the Bigwings pulled his youngest brother and sister into a huge hug, squeezing the both of them tightly.

"Clay," Sora replied, her voice breathy with hope and tender relief. Tears had begun escaping her eyes.

"I'm never letting either of you go again," Clay decided stoutly. "That's it. Nope, no more running away for you two, don't you even try."

"We're done running," Umber declared as he pulled away.
As Sora stayed with Clay, the MudWing turned to the rest of his friends. "We've missed you all so much," he said.

"We missed YOU," Kinkajou responded as she hugged him fiercely. "So don't ever run off again! You can't escape us anymore, Umber!"

The MudWing shook his head. "Good, I don't want to."

Moon smiled. "It's good to see you again, Umber," she said.

Turtle came up next to Kinkajou, and she pulled away, allowing him to then lean into Umber. "It's good to see you again," he said. "I'm glad you and Sora are all right."

Umber closed his eyes. "I missed you, clawmate," he whispered as he hugged the green SeaWing. The nights back in Jade Mountain where he and Turtle had slept back-to-back had done more for Umber than he thought they would; in a time of anxiety and

uncertainty, the SeaWing Prince had given Umber the warmth and privilege of a usual comfort, reminding him of the big piles he used to sleep in with his siblings. He and Sora had continued this while they were in the cave, of course, but there was something about Turtle's softer, green scales that Umber had grown to miss; the strange, gentle patterns his bioluminescent stripes made in his body, the particular toned-down heat from his body, like a sun-warmed current in the ocean. Reuniting with Turtle felt like some part of Umber's chest could finally relax again, like coming back home.

Umber wasn't sure how to express all of this to the SeaWing, though, so he hoped this would suffice for now.

Turtle brushed Umber's wing with his own. "I missed you too, Umber."

"Wow," Peril said, watching the display. "It's such a shame I burn everything I touch to a crisp, otherwise I would *totally* be in on this entire hugging thing you guys enjoy. Like, so much. You can't imagine."

Despite her sneaky tone, Umber offered her the warmest smile he could. She grinned at him knowingly, then gave him a warm smile of her own.

Tsunami walked up to Umber then. "Good to see you again, you rascal," she said affectionately as she brushed his wing.

Riptide chuckled. "If anyone can warm the heart, it's my girlfriend."

Umber had been conscious of Qibli staring at him the minute their presence to the group had been made known, and the SandWing had waited patiently for his turn to greet his friend. Sort of like the buildup to the big finale.

Now, Qibli was standing just behind Turtle, who conceded.

"Umber," was all the SandWing said as he hugged his clawmate.

At the touch of their scales, Umber's heart thumped harder. He felt the anxiety drain out of him, rejoicing in this moment.

"I missed you," Qibli said tenderly. "I mean, like you've heard from everyone else," he added jokingly. "I'm so glad that you and Sora are here. It's wonderful that we can all get along now, without any evil looming masterminds from the past or prophetic threats of war. You know?" He smiled.

Umber nodded, some unknown part of him now fulfilled – he had missed Qibli's jokes enough to pang his heart.
"It is quite freeing," he agreed. The two pulled back, grinning at each other.

Winter walked around to Moon. "We weren't interrupting anything, were we?" He asked.

She shook her head. "No. We were just waiting for the guests of honour."

Riptide regarded the congregation politely. "With all due respect, Tsunami and I best be going; a visit to Auklet is long overdue." He offered his wing to his girlfriend, who showed him her teeth in a grin.

"We're only going because I want to," the royal SeaWing reiterated to the room. Riptide and Clay both laughed at the same time, and the two SeaWings disappeared behind the curtain, their fuzzy silhouettes disappearing from sight.

"We don't have any other matters to discuss today," Winter addressed the council. "Let's go out and have fun, in honour of Umber and Sora."

Qibli bumped his wing to Umber's. "You're a guest of honour!" He celebrated. "How do you feel?"

Umber couldn't stop his smile, so wide and so persistent that he felt like his snout might break in two. He regarded the room – all of his friends were fine, but they were better than that; they were *thriving*. And Umber didn't feel sad that they had grown without him, like he might've been once when they first met; because he didn't see a room full of dragons happy to live without him. Moon and Winter were leaning into each other; Peril and Clay had their tails twined,

Kinkajou and Turtle were brushing wings; and Sora was finally with her older brother again.

And Qibli was right next to Umber, clasping his claws with his own, beaming at the MudWing.

And all of them were not only *happy* that Umber and Sora were here with them – they *wanted* them there.

Umber met Qibli's eyes with his own. "It feels like I can breathe again."

Not Alone [3] (UMBLI)

[image]

"Where should we go?" Sora asked from behind Umber, who was clacking his claws excitedly on the ground. He felt kind of nervous, even despite what he had just said.

"We could travel the marketplace and have some lunch maybe?" Winter suggested.

"Sure! Sound good with you guys?" Qibli asked, turning towards the two MudWings.

"Of course," Umber nodded rapidly, smiling, his claws tapping on the ground rhythmically.

"Umber, don't be so anxious!" Moonwatcher tutted, laughing. "You're our friend. You *know* us. Both of you, don't be afraid anymore, please? Just enjoy yourselves!"

The others nodded eagerly, agreeing and officially welcoming both MudWings into the Jade Winglet.

Umber smiled, and he could feel Sora beaming next to him. He felt the anxiousness slowly ebb away, running through him like water carving up stone as it left him to join the sea. It was soon replaced with excitement.

"I really want to explore the town!" He chirped, bounding over to Clay and Peril, ushering Sora with his tail.

"Let's go then!" The Bigwings grinned, leading the way to the curtain softly billowing in the breeze.

Once outside, Clay spread his wings and lifted off with a single flap.

The others followed and soon, all of them had landed in central Sanctuary, greeting shoppers and stall owners with smiles and waves and friendly calls.

Umber could feel his heart bursting with happiness and acceptance. After so many moons being in hiding, with malice and violence lurking around every threatening corner, it was so *wonderful* to be able to just bask in the moment, without a single worry in the world.

Well...

Almost without a single worry.

The MudWing glanced at Qibli a few paces up front from the corner of his eye. The rich yellow SandWing was currently giving his alluring smile to every dragon he passed. He was so charming, it was like he had swept Umber off his feet.

He was captivating, how he would crack jokes just to make everyone smile; like he needed to make others happy in order to know that he still had friends, like their laughter was assurance that the SandWing wasn't alone.

Sympathy beat alongside Umber's heart. That was kind of a sad thought. Why was Umber thinking this?

Oh no, was he blushing? Covertly, he angled his wing and brushed the crook of it to his face. Yep, he could feel heat in his scaly cheeks. Oops.

Sora trotted up next to him and brushed him with her wing, giggling. "Ooooh, staring at your *crush*, little brother?" She whispered, not helping.

"Shhh," Umber hissed, stepping back and giving her a small whack on the side with his tail.

Just then, Qibli slowed down and turned his head to them. "Would you like to go hunting with me, Umber?" The SandWing asked, extending his wing like an offering.

Beat.

"Yes, that would be nice. Thanks!" Umber nodded, equally excited and terrified.

Beat. Beat.

His heart was speeding up.

Umber knew what this was about. He knew Qibli had read the letter. All of it. This was it.

"We'll meet you at the Hall in an hour," Qibli told the others, who dismissed the situation without a second thought.

"Good luck," Sora whispered, and Umber suppressed a shudder. He could hear the smirk in his mischievous sister's voice.

Qibli took flight. Umber followed, trying to distract himself with literally anything else, like the marketers or his wingbeats.

It wasn't long before the two reached the outskirts of the town, and Qibli gracefully dove, snatching a startled goat from the ground and killing it swiftly.

Umber followed suit, stabbing his claws into a nearby roaming cow. Its guttural moo was ended quickly.

Sanctuary was also home to a healthy population of trees, with more than a few housing large wooden platforms not unlike those the RainWings used in their rainforest. Qibli lead the way to one of them, landing smoothly. "Come up," he invited, tapping next to him on the platform with the side of his stinger.

His nerves made him miscalculate and trip up; Umber accidentally spread his wings too late, causing him to stumble and almost fall as he nearly-but-not-quite crashed onto the platform.

Moons, you're like a huge, dumb, ox! Umber chastised himself, his brow furrowed as he tried to right himself. Qibli was chuckling, adding to the MudWing's embarrassment. But then Umber looked up from the platform to see that the SandWing wasn't laughing *at* him; rather, he was regarding him with a warm smile, offering his paw out for Umber to take.

Umber dropped the cow, feeling his humiliation pulse away as the realisation clicked: *Qibli would never laugh at me, he's not mean. He*

found it funny. Ha, he swoops in like a perfectly-practiced dance and I all but tumble onto the platform. That is *kind of funny.*

And Umber couldn't help but smile as he took Qibli's paw with his own, accepting the help gratefully.

"That was a far more interesting way to land than my pretentious, dignified method," Qibli commented as he pulled Umber up – the SandWing was deceptively strong! "I'm very lucky to have you to remind me to have fun in life, Umber," he added, smiling.

Umber almost couldn't believe his ears. *He's making a joke at his own expense for me! He's saying I'm the more right one in this exchange, so I can feel better!*

The MudWing wasn't sure whether his mind or his heart would short-circuit first, as his smile kept. "You're absolutely right," he added to the joke, brushing Qibli's wing as a silent way of saying thank you. "I firmly believe they should enlist MudWings in every other tribe to teach proper etiquette and conduct."

And then Qibli laughed. Not just a chuckle, but a *laugh*. Laughing at Umber's joke, bowing his head like a reed in the wind, his shoulders and wings shaking slightly with it. It was the most enchanting sound Umber had ever heard in his life, even more so than that haunting melody Marsh had played by blowing through those old bones of a huge ox back home in the Diamond Spray Delta. He was pretty sure he'd be content for the rest of his life if he could listen to Qibli's laugh every day.

The two began eating, now both smiling.

The sun filtered through the leaves, warming both dragons, thought Umber was already being warmed by the SandWing's natural heat scales and his own embarrassment. The longer the silence went on, the more time he had to panic about what he was going to say.

It wasn't long before Qibli finished his goat. Umber still had a bit more cow to go, so Qibli waited patiently for him, swapping between watching Umber eat (*Do I have cowhide in my teeth? Ow, those bones are poking my gums. Okay, just eat normally... how do*

normal dragons eat? Why am I forgetting how to chew?) and admiring the trees and the sky around them.

When he swallowed his last bite of cow, Umber sighed contentedly, using his tail to gather the bones together.

"So," Qibli began, starting slowly to ensure that Umber was ready. "What did you want to talk to me about?"

Umber inhaled and exhaled, wondering if he should look at Qibli or something else. He tapped his claws on the platform rhythmically, anxious.

Stick to the plan.

"I wanted to tell you something," the MudWing forced out, his words sounding slightly choked with worry.

Qibli raised a scaly brow, no doubt curious as to why Umber was acting so scared.

Umber's eyes flitted around, taking in the landscape. Even though they were on the edge of Sanctuary, he could see buildings and scavenger forts littering the ground, like sticks in the marsh. There was the sound of every animal: chirps, scurries, buzzes and caws. None of them seemed to be able to quell the sound of Umber's heart beating in his own ears.

"Whenever you're ready, Umber," Qibli assured, regarding Umber with a patient tilt of his head.

Umber wondered if it would make things awkward for him to jump off the platform, disappear into the horizon, and bury himself in the dirt back in the Mud Kingdom.

Stick to the plan.

"IthinkIlikeyou," Umber said in one breath, much louder than he wanted. Immediately, he cringed at his tactless confession, looking back down at the bones of his lunch.

Qibli blinked, as if he didn't know how to react or what to say. He

was quiet for a few moments, gathering his thoughts. "Like?" The SandWing echoed.

"As in..." Umber inhaled, intending to save this moment and give the SandWing the perfect love-confession he deserved; but suddenly, everything he had kept locked up close to his chest for countless months all came tumbling out. "I can't stop thinking about you, and you make me nervous. Everywhere I go, I unconsciously search for you, I want to find you in every crowd and I kept looking even though I knew I wouldn't find you." He worried at the platform, looking down at his paws and wishing he had the strength to look up. Would that look weird? What would be the most normal course of action to take? "I want to be there for you, and I want to be more than your friend. I want to be the reason for your laughter, I want to make you smile every day. I want to live knowing that I make every second of your day brighter just by being with you. I think this is more than a crush," he added, realising it for himself, his eyes widening as he finally identified the aching in his chest. "Qibli, I'm so sorry, but... I think I love you?"

Qibli stared at him, stunned.

Umber pulled in a breath and held it, finally looking up at the SandWing. He hadn't meant to ramble, but his nerves must have loosened his tongue. He wondered if that was a mistake, maybe he should have really planned this out before deciding to wing it. Oh dear, what if Qibli thought this was, like, the worst confession ever? Would the SandWing want to talk to him again, or had Umber irreversibly ruined their friendship forever?

That train of thought was too horrible to bear. He started to panic. "I'm sorry," he started, unable to ascertain any other feelings from the SandWing's face. "Moons, I'm so sorry. I should never have said any of that." He backed away a bit, whacking himself with his own wings. "I've put you in a really weird position, I'm so sorry, Qibli, the last thing I want is to jeopardise our friendship!" He looked behind him. "I should probably–"

"Umber!" Qibli said, catching his talon.

Umber stopped, turning back to look at him.

The SandWing shook his head. "Umber, just breathe for a moment. Moons, you're even more of a worrier than Turtle!" He regarded his friend warmly, clasping Umber's paw with both of his own. "Our friendship could never be ruined, don't *ever* worry about that. And there's no reason for you to be sorry! I'm just trying to figure out how I feel." He took a pause, sorting out his emotions. "I think... I like you, too?"

Umber felt like his heart might burst. He could see the many gears turning in Qibli's intelligent head, and waited for the SandWing to articulate his thoughts.

"I mean, when Winter and Moon became a couple, it didn't bother me nearly as much as I thought it would," Qibli said. "I think my affection towards Moon..." he tilted his head, thinking. "I think it was more... obsessive! Like, I was tricking myself into thinking I liked her, almost. Like I was trying to *make* myself like her, because that's how I thought I should feel about her. But I didn't, and I don't." He returned from his buzzing thoughts, taking a small moment to look at the dragon in front of him: seeing Umber in a new light. He saw the gorgeous shade of rich brown that Umber was coloured in, the way his wings were trembling ever so slightly; the look of admiration and hope in his bright yellow eyes, the adorable scar across the top of his snout that matched Qibli's own. "Umber, I think what I feel for you is different for what I felt for Moon. This feels... more real, more solid. I *do* like you. I like you, Umber."

Umber beamed. The dragon of his dreams had just reciprocated his feelings and now–

Something clicked.

"Like?" The MudWing blurted in an echo, eyebrows arching upwards in forlornness. "Do you need more time, Qibli? I think I confessed too fast," his elation retreated a bit as reality came back to ground him. I shouldn't push him, I should make sure he knows I'm here for him. "There's no pressure at all for you to reciprocate right now. I mean, I know you probably didn't give me much thought during the whole Darkstalker fiasco and –"

"What?" Qibli blinked, mouth agape, stopping the MudWing from rambling once more. "No! That's not it at all!" He took Umber's front paws in his own, looking at him with genuine care. "Umber, when you left Jade Mountain, I couldn't *stop* thinking about you." Qibli looked up into the taller dragon's eyes with sincerity, the expression on his face almost disbelieving, as if he couldn't believe that Umber would think of himself as so insignificant, least of all so insignificant to *Qibli*.
"I was in awe of your bravery and your courage," Qibli continued. "You were leaving behind everything you had known *again*, and this time to keep your sister safe. I tried distracting myself with the task at talon, but every night I wondered where you were... if you were safe." His hold on Umber became just a bit more tight, like he was finally touching a dream and didn't want to let go again.

The MudWing stared bewilderedly at his crush, wondering if he was hearing him right. "You did?" He asked, his voice tainted with almost disbelieving relief and longing and sincerity as he realised how much he really meant to Qibli. "You – you were in *awe* of me?"

Qibli smiled. "Of *course* I was. I am." He looked down for a few moments, then back at Umber. "I don't know how it's possible, but I think our time away from each other has only... grown our feelings. Umber, I think I love you too."

Umber's vision blurred and happy tears trickled down his scales, and Qibli wrapped his wings around him.

In the dome of the SandWing's comforting warmth, Umber flung his arms around the taller dragon, feeling happier than he had in a long, long time. Her spread his own large wings over Qibli's.

"Things are going to be different from now on, Umber," Qibli whispered, hugging him tighter.
"You're not alone anymore."

Umber pressed his muzzle against Qibli, the latter happily returning the kiss.

Qibli pulled away after a bit and soothingly caressed the side of Umber's face with a claw.

"So I guess we're boyfriends now?" Umber asked, nervously.

Qibli laughed. "I guess we are. And I'm so happy for that."

Umber basked in the SandWing's warmth. His laughter sounded like the most joyful noise the MudWing had ever heard, and he swore an oath that he'd strive to make sure Qibli laughed every day.

Qibli gave him another peck on the nose and spread his wings. "Let's go tell the others the great news," he suggested.

Umber nodded. "I'd like that," he smiled.

And when they took flight, they relished each other's company – bumping wings, brushing against each other freely. Now that they had each other, the world seemed brighter.

Inseparable (ANEMARIN)

The Princess of the SeaWings disturbed the water with her tail, creating little ripples across the surface. It was nothing compared to the large splashes the other SeaWings were making, and usually Anemone would be joining them; but today she felt perfectly content on her boulder.

She was in the underground pool, as she always was whenever the students of Jade Mountain Academy had free time. Naturally, it was the SeaWings' favourite place in the school. It was also favoured by a couple of RainWings: namely Kinkajou who loved spending her time there with Turtle, and... Tamarin.

Anemone felt her heart speed up at just the thought of the blind RainWing as she stole a glance at her. Tamarin was resting on one of the large flat boulders by the pool, her tail and claws drawing in the water, creating paintings in the ripples.

Anemone groaned internally. She would love to be even just Tamarin's friend. But Tamarin was a RainWing and she was a SeaWing.

And worse... Tamarin was a girl.

Usually, such a frivolous detail wouldn't matter; in fact, if Anemone were anyone but herself, it wouldn't matter. But of course, the thought had crossed Anemone's mind more than once (mostly due to Pike *constantly* reminding her – why?) about the fact that a princess as herself could only produce heirs to the royal bloodline if she had dragonets – and to have dragonets meant finding a partner. A *male* partner.

Speaking of Pike, the thin grey-ish student wasn't in the water playing with the other SeaWings; instead he stood rooted behind Anemone, with a face like he was ready to protect her, as always.

Anemone turned her full attention back to Tamarin, who was a

lavender-purple colour with her underbelly a light yellow. The colours weren't bright like Kinkajou's, but more... muted.

Pulses of red ebbed from around the scars Tamarin had received from her time in the rainforest and the burns from the history cave. Every time she had a muscle-spasm or wing-twitch, the RainWing made a face as though she was trying not to wince.

Anemone sighed, crossing over her paws. Without really registering what she was thinking, she said to herself, "I wish you would just heal up already, scars! You don't even *deserve* to be on a dragon that beautiful, let alone cause her –"
She caught herself too late.

No sooner than the words had left the Princess's *enchanted* jaws did the command leap to life.
Before her eyes, Tamarin's injuries healed up – the cuts closing over themselves to create skin, the burns fleshing over to rebuild muscle and scales.
A lifetime of learning and falling and failure erased itself from the RainWing's body.

Tamarin gasped loudly, out of shock rather than pain. "What's going on?" She asked, her eyes growing wide behind the blindfold. "I – my burns!" Her paws went to her sides, feeling the new skin. "The scars, I ... I can't feel them anymore!"

Then Anemone had an idea.

"Oh, goodness, Tamarin!" The Princess leapt off the boulder and made her way to the RainWing in question, leaving an alarmed Pike behind her. "I'm so sorry, Tamarin, that was me! I accidentally enchanted your scars away!"

Tamarin's jaw fell, facing the Princess as she stopped a paw away from her. "You... *magicked* them away?"

Anemone nodded instinctively, went to mentally slap herself, then realised Tamarin would know anyway. "I, um, I acted out of instinct when I saw you were in... in pain."

Tamarin was still touching for the burns to make sure they were really gone. She stirred the water thoughtfully with her tail. "I... I mean, I'm not in pain anymore... but I did like my scars..."

Anemone tilted her head. "Um... I guess I could magic them back on there, right? If you wanted me to?"

Tamarin shook her head. "No, it's fine. Just a bit alarming, is all. I mean, I've had those scars all my life. They're... part of me. Like how being blind is part of me."

The Princess was hesitant, but she asked anyway. "Tamarin, if you had the chance to see... would you take it?"

Tamarin screwed her eyebrows together. "I... I don't know." The RainWing smiled, just faintly, in amusement. "I mean, I've only thought about it all my life. But... it's who I am, isn't it?" She let gravity pull her head forlornly downward. "I'm the blind one. That's me. I'm the one that can't see."

"That is *not* who you are," Anemone replied, splashing the water a bit to emphasise her point. "You are so much more than that, Tamarin! You're thoughtful and smart and so caring and kind. And the moons know you have more tolerance than any dragon *I've* ever met."

She took a breath, wondering if she had crossed the line. Anemone watched Tamarin closely, trying to gauge her reaction.

The RainWing still looked doubtful.

Splashing came up behind them. "Princess!" Pike cried. "It's nearly time to go."

No, not yet, please.

"Give me a minute, Pike!" Anemone responded offhandedly.
Pleading, more like.
"Tamarin," she addressed, her heart thumping faster. "If you could stop being blind, would you take the chance?"

The possibility hung in the air. Time was running short. There was

a lot of stress.

Tamarin opened her mouth, then closed it again. She swallowed, then nodded. "Yes," she said. "Of course I would."

Anemone's breath came out in a whoosh. "Tamarin, do you trust me?"

The red from Tamarin's scales was long gone; now, blooms of pink flourished on the lavender and yellow backdrop of the RainWing's sleek body.

"Yes. I trust you, Anemone," she answered.

"Princess?" Pike prompted from behind the two.

"I won't be long," the Princess in question hissed at her self-appointed bodyguard, her teeth snapping around the words. Then she turned her head once more to Tamarin.

She raised a talon, shaking it to make sure it was dry. Her heartrate bumped up to five times its normal speed, but Anemone forced her talon to stop shaking. She was not allowed to lose focus, not now.

"My talon is near your cheek," the Princess confirmed in a soft voice, in case Tamarin couldn't sense it. The RainWing twitched her tail in acknowledgement, and Anemone gently hooked her talon underneath the leaf blindfold so her claw was hovering over Tamarin's temple – but also making sure the only part she touched was the blindfold.

Anemone inhaled silently, then spoke:
"I enchant this blindfold so that the moment I tear it, the dragon who used to wear it will have the eyesight as perfect as a hawk's in the day and as keen as an owl's at nighttime."

As softly as she could in one swift motion, Anemone stabbed her claw through the blindfold and ripped it through.
It fell from Tamarin's head, revealing her closed eyes.

Tamarin reeled, sputtering in alarm. She opened her eyes, and instead of pupil-less clear irises there resided eyes as amber and

warm as sunshine.
"Anemone! How did – why... what... what..."

Tamarin blinked obsessively, as if convinced her new sense would disappear as suddenly as it had come. She stared at her talons in front of her. "What..."

Hesitantly, Anemone took one of the paws in her own.
Tamarin's line of sight drifted up from her own paw to Anemone. Her new daffodil eyes widened.

"Anemone... is that *you*?"

The SeaWing nodded, a small but warm smile on her snout.

"You're..." Tamarin's eyes pooled with tears. She rushed forward, crumpling the Princess into a tight hug. Her wings seemed to shield the two from all outside inspection: inside existed only them, only in this moment.

Anemone stiffened with shock, but quickly melted into the hug.

"You're beautiful," Tamarin whispered – half to herself. As she pulled back, she did not shy away from scrutinising her new best friend. She extended the SeaWing's wing to reveal the royal patterns.
"My moons, I can't thank you enough," Tamarin's voice wavered. She blinked to erase her tears, though they had been freely falling for a few moments.

Anemone never wanted to leave this cave, so long as it meant she'd stay here and talk to Tamarin. She never wanted to leave this moment, basking in Tamarin's affection and elation.

Words the SeaWing wanted to spill rushed to her surface, threatening to break the tension, threatening to flow out of her like a waterfall.

She caught them like bubbles, tenderly leading them back to the cave inside her chest. It was too soon.
Just a little bit longer, Anemone promised herself.

"Princess," Pike splashed up next to her. "The gong has sounded, it's time to leave."

Tamarin dropped the girl's wing, turning her new eyes to the newcomer. *"You* must be Pike!" She observed.

The bodyguard twisted his snout, unsure what to make of the situation.

"Thank you, Pike," Anemone said kindly. She stretched, then turned her head to Tamarin. "Come with us," the Princess said suddenly, a bit too quick. "I can show you all the colours! If... if you'd want me to. And you know that I love spending time with you."

Tamarin beamed, her scales radiating her happiness by bleeding yellow. "Oh, I would love to!" She hugged Anemone again. "Thank you, so so much."

The RainWing twined tails with the SeaWing Princess, making Anemone smile even bigger – if such a thing was possible.

Pike ducked his head. "Then let's go," he murmured, slightly uncomfortable.

As he lead the two away from the underground pool, Tamarin enquired about every colour and every bird and most of all, every flower; and Anemone responded in like, unable to stop admiring Tamarin's eyes, which were as gold as the sun.
Unbeknownst to the Princess, Tamarin found herself engaged with the same dilemma, marvelling at the noble colour of silvery-blue Anemone's eyes were.

From then on, the two were rarely out of each other's company. Among the students of Jade Mountain Academy, they became known as the sun and the moon because of their eye-colour. And like the sun and the moon, Tamarin and Anemone needed each other; they were inseparable.

Don't Back Out (WINTERWATCHER)

Nightfall.

Winter inhaled and exhaled, feeling nauseous. He had made himself as shiny as possible, and had flown from Sanctuary to the rainforest to visit Moon. Normally she'd be at school, but there was a two-week break after every "term". At least, that's what Kinkajou had told him through her letters.

He now waited in front of her hut, tugging at his black pouch. He breathed in the humid air, trying to muster up the courage to knock. The three moons, each half-full, shone down from above, piercing the overhanging canopy and creating pools of moonlight.

Come on, he coaxed himself. *You can't back down now.*

Winter rapped sharply on the door with his knuckles (first he was going to use his claws, but was worried his serrated IceWing talons would get stuck in the door), and waited, feeling his ice cheeks burn.

A NightWing, presumably Moon's mother, Secretkeeper, opened the door. He saw her face soften. "You must be Winter! Moon's told me so much about you. Hang on, I'll go get her."

Winter gulped, smiling and nodding. He was glad Secretkeeper approved of him (and even gladder that Moon had talked about him a lot), and watched the black and grey NightWing whirl about inside. He heard a muffled, "Moon! Come great one of your friends at the door!"

He heard a furious clattering of claws, and then the door opened.

Winter drew in a breath.

It's her.

I can breathe again.

There she was, in all her glory. The teardrops by her eyes sparkled, and her face lit up so ferociously, it reminded him of the light orbs back home.

"Winter!" Instantly, she wrapped her wings around him and brought him into a hug. He felt her shiver at his coldness, but she didn't draw back.

"Moon! I'm - I'm so glad I could come see you."

She pulled back, and he felt a sudden heat leave him. "Come on, I know the perfect pavilion for stargazing."

She took flight, and he followed her. It was much too humid for him, but he didn't want to complain.

Soon, the arrived at the pavilion. It was the highest one, and it gave a perfect view of the black roan pasture above them. Moon blended in almost perfectly in her natural habitat.

The two landed and sat down, entwining tails and discussing the constellations.

You have to ask her soon, he told himself.

"Um - Moon?" He asked awkwardly. He tugged at his black pouch, as if it was making him uncomfortable.

She glanced at him. "Winter?" She asked him sharply. "What's wrong?"

He pulled away, dug around in his pouch for a few seconds, and held the earring.

It was one of the extremely few things Hailstorm had managed to smuggle out from the Ice Kingdom for him. It was a beautiful moon-silver loop earring with a sapphire teardrop, like an IceWing version of Qibli's.

He zipped his pouch shut, and clasped the earring in his talons. The sapphire shone in the moonlight, and Moon tilted her head at him.

Winter faced her.

And knelt to the ground.

And Moon stopped breathing.

"Moonwatcher, where do I start with you? From the first day I met you, this very day a year ago, I fell in love with you. I didn't want to admit it to myself, because I was mad about Hailstorm. I'm so, so, so sorry about how I acted to you. But you've been so, so kind to me. How can I ever repay that kindness? Well, I hope this will... I understand if it doesn't, but..."

He held out the earring.

"Moon, will you marry me?"

Moonwatcher was speechless.

For a second, Winter feared he had just made the worst mistake. *She's going to say no.*

What have I done?

"YES!" Moon practically screamed, tears cascading down her delicate snout. She took the earring from him and clipped it on her right ear.

Winter wrapped his wings around her, crying half-frozen tears as well. He couldn't believe it.

He wrapped his wings around her, and in the small dome, she gently connected her snout with him, both crying happily.

"I love you," she whispered after they broke apart. They both glanced up at the stars, knowning the sky was as infinite as their love.

Winter leaned into her. "I love you too."

Happy Again (THORNMOVER)

Stonemover was ecstatic.

He could fly again. He could breathe again.

He was normal.

His scales weren't the grey of stones, but sleek black. He thought of his daughter, and smiled largely. If it hadn't been for Sunny, Stonemover probably wouldn't have ever used his magic again. But she had coaxed him to transfer his stone-like scales to the cave walls, replacing them with beautiful, crisp midnight scales. He was in peak condition; he felt better than he ever had before.

After so long, Stonemover could see the light of the sky.

And he was on his way to the Sand Kingdom.

He needed to pay Thorn a visit. He needed to tell her. He needed to *see* her.

As he did delights loop-the-loops in the sky, he saw the Sand Kingdom below him. He whooped and cheered as he dove right down to the entrance.

There were two guards, of course, who blocked the way. They looked like brothers, each the same shade of yellow.

"Halt! What is your business, NightWing?" The burliest one asked, pointing a hefty spear at Stonemover.

"I've come to see her majesty, Queen Thorn." He answered.

The SandWing narrowed his eyes.

And a very familiar voice sounded from behind them.

"Now, Bighorn, what have I told you about being rude to guests?"

Stonemover felt his heart beat louder.

The addressed SandWing, Bighorn, bowed. "Forgive me, my Qu – Thorn," he corrected himself; Thorn had never been one for formalities – shame she had to assume just about the most formal position one could.

Stonemover's breath caught in his throat as his mate walked in front of Bighorn.

There was a second when nobody spoke as both mates looked just as shocked as the other.

"S–Stonemover?" Thorn whispered, her eyes wide.

"Thorn... it is me. Sunny convinced me to use my powers... to get rid of my curse... and... we can be happy again."

Thorn stood, rooted to the spot.

"Bighorn, Buffalo, you may leave," she said.

The two guards nodded, turned around and left.

Thorn threw herself onto Stonemover. "I can't believe you came *back* to me," she cried happily.

The NightWing hugged her. "I missed you so, so much, Thorn. We can finally be happy now."

The SandWing queen smiled, noting she would have to ask Buffalo to announce to the rest of the Outclaws that the NightWing meant no harm.

"Sunny will be delighted," Thorn smiled at her partner, and pressed her snout against his.

The two enveloped each other in their leathery wings, crying freely.

After all this time, they could be happy again.

Heart of Smoke (CLERIL)

The rain pelted down on the SkyWing's and MudWing's wings, making it hard for the two to fly. Each raindrop sizzled when coming in contact to Peril's scorching scales, and curling grey smoke spiralled out each time a raindrop pelted her.

Clay whacked his wing with hers. "Lighten up!" He laughed, doing a twirl in the dismal sky. "You look grumpy."

"I don't look grumpy!" Peril stated. "I always look like this!" She grinned at him, and her heart thumped faster.

He flashed a grin at her and darted back towards the school. "Catch me if you can!" He roared, his voice heard even over the thunder. Peril couldn't help but laugh. As far as she knew, Clay was the only dragon who truly accepted her for who she was. Scarlet, despite what Peril used to think, was only using her for her own gory satisfaction.

The dismal day had driven the students back into the warm dryness of the large mountain, home of Jade Mountain Academy.

Now, Peril thought to herself. *Tell him NOW, Peril! UGH, I HATE this stupid feeling in my stomach.*

"Uh, Clay?" Peril asked, hovering in the air. The MudWing in question flapped back up next to her, worried.

"What's wrong, Peril?"

Peril opened her mouth, but no words called out. Clay became more worried.

"Let's land," he suggested.

Peril nodded, feeling sick, and followed after him. They landed in front of the school. All the students were inside, to escape the storm.

It's only us.

Right as the MudWing was going to ask her if she was okay again, Peril spoke.

"I LOVE YOU," she blurted, and immediately cringed.

Clay faltered, wondering if he had heard her right. "....Wha-"

"I mean, I love you, in the way when I can't forget you, I think about you all the time, I get really grouchy and annoyed whenever somebody else acts like they like you, and just now I'm realising how stupid everything's sounding because this will probably ruin our friendship and I know you could never love a monster like me but I just needed to -"

"PERIL!" Clay took her talons in his, not even wincing at the steam.

The SkyWing's ears drooped at his words, and in that moment she knew she had ruined everything. *I'm such a kestrel-brain,* she growled to herself. *He's never going to love me back I think I just ruined everything oh moons NO -*

"Peril. Listen." Clay gently placed her talons over his beating heart. "You are *not* a monster. You're amazing. I'm sorry Scarlet was so mean to you. I'm sorry you had to live thinking even your mother hated you. I'm sorry for everything, but I do know one thing: I'm not sorry that I saved you. I wish I wasn't the only one who accepted you, but I am. At least, I think I am. I also think I love you too. All my other girl friends - I've always thought of Tsunami and Sunny and Glory as sisters. But know that I think about it, I don't think the same with you. I guess I never really realised it, but whenever I thought about you, my heart sang, in a way that didn't sing for anyone else."

Speaking of hearts, Peril was pretty sure hers was thumping at such a pace she might need medical aid. Her thoughts were all jumbling over each other, a stream of WHAT and HANG ON and WHAT IS HE SAYING and IS THIS HAPPENING and AM I DREAMING, IF I AM I NEVER WANT TO WAKE UP.

Clay locked his warm, inviting brown eyes with her sky blue ones. "What I'm saying is.... yes. I love you too."

Peril's heart exploded like the dragonflame cactus when it touched her claws.

The SkyWing opened her mouth again, but all that came out was a delighted sob. Clay extended his wing in a hug to her, and she buried her head in the crook of his neck. She didn't know WHY she was crying but she was FAIRLY SURE it was making her LOOK BAD in front of CLAY and she WANTED IT TO STOP NOW.

But Clay hugged her, not caring that his scales lightly steamed on contact. He had accepted Peril, with all of her insecurities and dangers, and that was what made her so happy: he was hers, finally.

And she was his.

As the two entwined tails and wings in the healing hug that drove Peril to more tears, the raindrops that battered her sizzling skin curled up into smoke.

The gentle breeze played around with the swirl of grey until it rose to become a heart above them both.

A perfect heart.

Clay's heart was perfect. Peril's heart needed mending.

But Clay was fixing it. Bit by bit, he was fixing it.

And soon, her heart would match his. Soon, it would match the heart of grey dancing happily in the sky.

Undertow (DARKSIGHT)

The night was bad. Rain battered Clearsight's roof, and she shivered, trying to find warmth near the fireplace.

Swiftwings and Stareye, her parents, were out at work. They had promised they would visit her afterwards, but there was still no sign of them. They were probably waiting for the storm to finish, though there were no signs of the clouds letting up.

Clearsight shivered again, her mind spinning the many threads in her head. It had been a month since Foeslayer's disappearance, and frankly, Clearsight was worried about what her boyfriend might do. He had fallen into a sort of angry mourning, where he kept insisting his mother would be home soon, like he hadn't come to grips with the fact that she was gone.

Clearsight had gone to visit Fathom that afternoon, which was around when the storm started. She had asked for his advice and checked in on him.

"It must be awful for Darkstalker to lose someone so close to him," Fathom had said. "I understand how he feels. Losing my parents and everyone I knew like that..." he had cast a nervous side-glance at the SeaWing carving he had given his friend, and Clearsight understood the truth: he wasn't so much talking about everything that had happened when he was five, back when the SeaWing Royal Massacre happened; he was more talking about Indigo. Clearsight had seen the many futures of when they had dragonets, so she knew the love wasn't one-sided. It was strange, though; now that Indigo left him, the timelines hadn't. She'd have to look into that.

The door slammed, and Clearsight jolted out of her stupor. She realised she had been staring at the fire, and when she turned to see who was home, the warmth of the flames left her scales, making her feel cold again.

Her heart jumped when she saw who it was.

"I'm back," his gruff voice said. The hybrid waded his way through Clearsight's furniture and closed his wings around her. She stood and returned the hug, her heart aching.

"Darkstalker. What happened?" Despite not being a mindreader, she knew something was up. The moment their wings had touched, a thousand new timelines rippled into existence. Most of them involved Darkstalker crying, finally breaking down.

"Come back," her love's voice said, softer than she expected. He traced her cheek with his talon careful not to hurt her, and she saw the pain and sorrow in his eyes.

He was soaked from flying in the rain, and he turned to the fireplace, allowing the heat to dry him off.

"C-Clearsight, I..." Darkstalker trailed off, staring into the flames.

Just then, a horrifying new future leapt into Clearsight's mind.

"You can't kill Diamond," she gasped.

Darkstalker didn't look away from the fire. "Yes, I can," he growled. "Quite easily. And I can kill Snowfox, too. The IceWings are helpless. I could just enchant Diamond to hand her over now." He turned away and faced her, and Clearsight saw so perfectly the real him under the horrific murderous schemes and agonising grief: the Darkstalker who was an empty husk of a dragon. Having someone he loved so much ripped away from him was torturing him.

"Darkstalker, please," Clearsight's voice was wavering more than she liked, like a turning point balancing on a knife's edge. "Please, don't. It leads to bad things."

"Then let me fix them," he said, quietly. He was staring down at his claws, and Clearsight knew it was taking all of his effort for him to stop himself from crying.

Without another word, she wrapped her wings around him and pulled him into a hug, despite being the smaller dragon. Darkstalker rested his head on her neck, and she felt his tears wet her scales.

"Oh, Darkstalker... is there anything I can do to make you feel better?" She asked.

Darkstalker slowly pulled away and gave her a sad smile. He used his talon to lift her chin up, so she was looking him in the eyes. "You don't have to do anything. Just by being yourself, you've helped me so much. Mother's absence has taken a toll on me, is all. I guess I still have you and Whiteout."

As if the thought had summoned his unique sister, the sound of soft leathery wingbeats rang into their ears as Whiteout landed outside the door. She gently shoved it open, stepped in, and closed it behind her. She allowed the rain to slide off her cold scales, the fire contracting her midnight blue scales nicely.

Whiteout turned to look at her brother. "Mother's absence has left you broken," she stated. She began walking over to the pair. "You have to heat up. You're too frozen. I fear what will come of this day." She closed her eyes. A moment later, without opening her eyes again, Whiteout said almost too quietly, "there's too much tangerine. It's hurting my heart."

Darkstalker squeezed his eyes shut, looking to be in pain. "Whiteout... your mind..." he clutched his head, and Clearsight was thankful she wasn't a mindreader.
"What's wrong, Darkstalker?" The seer asked, gently placing her paw on his shoulder, where the wing's roots started to form.

Whiteout turned to stare sadly at Clearsight, and did an unexpected thing; came forward to give the seer a hug. Clearsight hugged back, and she could feel Whiteout's strangely warm tears fall onto her shoulder.

"Make sure you don't lose him," Whiteout whispered. "Please, bring him back to the light."

Clearsight nodded, smiling at the odd dragonet. Whiteout pulled away, dipping her head at the NightWing, and turned to her brother.

"Darkstalker," she whispered, taking his paw and tracing the lines of

his palm. "Brother. Your black is doomed... you're going to spiral into the white and orange, if your clock stops running. It may be too late. Your time might already have come and gone."

Darkstalker stared quizzically at her, and Clearsight shivered. *That* didn't sound entirely delightful.

"You can turn yourself around; you can pick up the fallen grains of sand again. Let the azure one help you."

With that, Whiteout shook her strangely beautiful wings, walked to the door, and flew back out into the fray of rain and thunder.

Clearsight and Darkstalker stared at each other.

"What was that about?" Darkstalker asked, quietly.

Clearsight shrugged. "I'm... not entirely sure. You're her brother."

Darkstalker sighed, his eyes pooling with new tears. "I love you."

Clearsight held him in her wings, taking her talons in his. "Let me help you, Darkstalker. Don't push me away. I can make it better."

She stared out her window at the storm, and she felt herself being pulled away, both from Darkstalker's eyes and wings and claws and heart, and by the visions that were piling up into a great mountain in her head, about to crumble down.

"I... simply... have to..."

Clearsight felt her eyes glaze over and close as she was carried away once again in the undertow of the future.

Snowy, Sandy, Starry (MOONBLI + WYNX)

Summer.

When the sun was high and the icicles had melted.

Qibli saw this as awesome. Winter saw this as not so awesome.

Winter had been complaining the entire way to Sanctuary.

"What if Lynx doesn't want to see me?" He asked, fighting with his claws as they flew over the rainforest.

Qibli laughed, and swooped through some vines. "Don't worry about it, Iglooface. Lynx has been sending me increasingly adoring letters about wanting to meet up with you again." Qibli smiled as he left the sentence to hang there as he reminisced about when Moon and Lynx had first met.

Lynx had laughed and smiled and acted as if she weren't an IceWing royal member at all. She had treated Moon like an equal. And Moon had done the same. Qibli had a feeling both of them would be exceptional friends.

Plus, they were both dating Qibli and Winter.

Yeah, it was true. Winter had recovered from losing Moon surprisingly quickly - after he found Lynx again, anyway. She had realised he wasn't doing great and came immediately to cheer him up. He had laughed and danced (much to Qibli's surprise, and he had made it painfully clear to Winter that this new piece of information will almost certainly be put to use of blackmail) and smiled and forgotten, for hours at a time, what had happened to him. He was as good as dead to the new queen, his own cousin, Snowfall. But Lynx had risked banishment to work at Sanctuary, just to be with HIM. It truly had been love written in the snow.

Winter slapped his wing with Qibli's. "Helloooo! King of winging it! We're here."

Qibli glanced down and realised that was true. The green landscape had changed from lush trees to bland, jagged rock, to half frozen karst land and half barren wasteland. On that wasteland stood stone walls that rose not at all that high. It looked exactly like a Scavenger's Den. Qibli grinned as he once again remembered how he had gotten Sunny to help wth designing Sanctuary, having seen and been to a Scavenger Den herself (Qibli's adoptive sister had told him all about Holler and Fluffy, and he loved seeing her eyes light up each time she did).

The duo landed at the entrance of the safe Sanctuary, and Qibli knocked, his wings shivering with excitement as Winter fidgeted anxiously.

The door slid open and revealed a NightWing and an IceWing inside, both beaming.

"Qibli!" Moon beamed and hugged her boyfriend. Lynx grinned and waved at Winter. "Hey, Winter!" She smiled, hugging him. Winter glowed inside, like a freshly-polished icicle. "H-hey, Lynx. How is everything?"

"Good, good!" Lynx fluttered her wings and smiled awkwardly.

"Come on, you two!" Moon cried happily as they raced inside.

Winter and Lynx shrugged, clasped talons, and bolted after the pair.

Murderer (GLORYBRINGER)

[A/N: I don't really ship Glorybringer, here is my reasoning: Apparently on the fandom wikia for WOF, it is estimated that 7 in dragon years is 14 in human years, and on the chart each year roughly goes up by 2 human years and then 1.5. The chart only goes up to ten. From this we can make an estimate that since Glory is 7, she is 14 in human years, and we can loosely assume that since Deathbringer is 13 in dragon years, he would be roughly 21.5 in human years since 10 in dragon years is 18. Which means, Deathbringer is a 21 year old dating Glory, a 14 year old, which is pretty pedophilic. I know on the same chart it says the age which dragons can reproduce is 7 dragon years (13 human years) so it isn't *really* pedophilic, but it still doesn't sit right with me. Plus, you could say a 13 year old girl can reproduce because she gets her period, but that doesn't justify a 21 year old dating her.
Anyhow, I don't ship it, but I of course have to do a chapter on it because it's like *the* fan favourite, so if this chapter appears rushed / half-assed, you know why.]

"Thank you, Jambu," Queen Glory sighed and with a nod of her head, her half-brother was dismissed from her treehouse.

The sun was trying to pierce through the trees overhead, and only succeeded in some parts, and a couple of RainWings were taking advantage of this by huddling under it and flopping over one another to sleep.

The queen sighed, a feeling of dissatisfaction settling inside her. Was she bored?

Her half-brother, his scales pink as ever, waved goodbye to her and bounded away towards the sunlight.

Glory waved back half-heartedly.

"What's wrong, your majesty?" Deathbringer, the black-scaled dragon to her side, asked.

The queen of the RainWings shrugged. "I don't know." She turned to her friend. "Want to go eat?"

Deathbringer nodded, the spear he always held glinting in the sunlight as the two swooped down towards the rainforest floor.

The wind whistled passed the trees, shaking the leaves and bringing Glory up a little. All around her, the residents of the rainforest, NightWing and RainWing alike, were enjoying each other's company.

"Glory, do you ever think there'd be any hybrids in the rainforest kingdom?" Deathbringer asks suddenly, slicing into the wool of his sheep.

The queen blinked at him. "Of course I do," she replied, confused. "I'd welcome them. I know what it's like to not be wanted, and I'd never wish that on any of my tribe."

Deathbringer smiled, his bloodstained teeth glinting. "You're a great queen," he said carefully, and Glory looked up at him.

"What are you doing, you pain in the tail?" She questioned.

The NightWing laughed, and Glory couldn't help but smile.

"I can see you've mastered the formal, queenly speaking," Deathbringer sassed, and she felt relieved.

"Have... have *you* ever thought about having dragonets?" She asked him, turning over the guava in her claws and making sure to scrutinise its every aspect. At first glance it could be taken as a pear, unless you sliced into it and sucked out its juicy red inside.

Deathbringer contemplated this, staring hard at the trees behind her.

"Deathbringer? Did you h–"

The NightWing dropped his sheep and vaulted over the queen, plunging into the darkness behind her majesty.

She turned just as he dragged out a scrawny RainWing, about a year older than Glory herself, his scales pale green with fear.

"What were you doing? I saw you with this," Deathbringer growled, whipping his tail away from the RainWing to reveal a dagger wrapped in the coils of his tail.

The RainWing hardened his glare.

The rainforest around the three seemed alive now, no doubt with other RainWings pretending to be accessories to the trees, and NightWings hiding with them in the forest's shadows.

The RainWing's scales shifted back to what was probably his main colours: red at the top which faded into pale orange at the bottom, with black scales all down his legs.

"I'm Ackee," the RainWing growled, and Glory was startled at the harshness and gruffness of this dragon's voice.

"I came to Glory with –"

"You will address her as *Queen* Glory," Deathbringer growled, giving Ackee a shake.

Glory held out a wing to silence him, worry erupting on her face.

"She's not my queen. Not at *all*. My father was one of the RainWings that was trapped down in the NightWing village, clad in chains and bound, *tortured*. Glory rescued all the others but left him to suffer."

Glory's eyes widened. Crushing guilt rolled into her.

"What–" she cleared her throat upon realising her voice was feeble. "What was your father's name?"

For a second Ackee looked dangerously close to crying, but they slammed a blank expression back on their face.

"Wait," Deathbringer asked. "How does Ackee know who his father is? I thought RainWings don't 'do' families?"

The trees were suddenly alive with whispers and murmurs.

Ackee set his jaw. "My parents were different," he growled. "They decided they actually loved each other and didn't want to part with their son, which is me. But my father was captured. Around the same time Glory arrived here. My mother, Physalis, was killed the same day, no doubt by the NightWings who took my father."

Tears were escaping the dragonet's eyes, but his voice did not waver. Glory's heart ached for him. He had been through so much pain already.

His glare became rigid again. "My father's name is Nerium. His main colouring was dark blue with pale pink and purple scales. Glory had the option to save him. And she didn't."

His words left the queen reeling.

"I saved everyone I could!" She roared, guilt fueling her anger rather than outrage. "I don't even know a–"

She cut herself off and cried out in agony as she realised she did see a blue and pink RainWing when she was down there. She thought he was dead. She left him.

"I... I thought he was dead," she managed, staring at the ground.

Ackee roared, and if he could breathe fire, there would've no doubt been smoke twisting out of his nostrils.

"He was alive! You could have saved him!"

"How are you so sure?" Deathbringer demanded. "You will not treat Queen Glory like this unless you provide solid evidence that she is to blame."

Ackee hissed loudly. "They told me," he growled. "They told me I had one chance to save him. His captors came to me with an agreement. I help them take over the rainforest and they'd let my

father go."

A collective gasp rattled the trees.

Ackee twisted his neck skyward, then back down so he was staring straight at Glory.

"What could I have done? They'd taken my mother, and Glory hadn't even cared. She'd heard all about the other RainWings being trapped, yet when word came round, 'Physalis is dead', she didn't care a fig. 'That strange case Ackee's father might still be alive', and he could have been. But you *left him*!"

Without warning, Ackee unhinged his jaw and shot two strings of venom at the queen.

They flew wide, missing her and slamming into the trees behind her, already sizzling the bark away.

The look on his face told everyone that Ackee had meant to miss. And that he wouldn't miss next time.

"Ackee," the queen croaked. "I'm so sorry. I didn't –"

"SORRY DOESN'T BRING BACK MY FATHER, YOU MURDERER!"

There was a sound like a dart spinning through the air and something struck the angry RainWing's neck.

Ackee froze, his eyes burning with an unseen flame.

And then he fell limp in Deathbringer's talons, and Glory turned her head to see Jambu holding the blowgun.

›◊‹

"I've ordered the guards to watch him for the night," Deathbringer informed Glory, who was now back in her hut, her face in her paws.

"Thank you, Deathbringer," she sighed, shaking her head.

"I don't understand it. I really thought Nerium was dead," she said.

"I never heard Physalis had been killed, and where is Nerium now?"

Deathbringer took Glory's talon in his, and held it. "Don't worry yourself about it," he said. "We'll give Ackee a trial in the morning. Although, I don't really think this particular situation warrants one; he did try to kill you. Everyone was a witness to it."

Glory sighed, spreading her wings around Deathbringer.

He did the same, wrapping his wings around them both.

They stayed like that for a while, Glory weeping onto his shoulder.

"You've always been here for me, Deathbringer," Glory sighed, resting her head on his neck. "I love you."

Deathbringer did not hesitate.

"I love you too."

They smiled at each other, and Glory couldn't help but think, *at least one thing has worked itself out.*

I'm so glad I have him. Even if I am a murderer, at least I've got him.